

## NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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IN RE: :  
 :  
THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF : NTSB Accident No.  
THE COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001  
OCTOBER 1, 2015 :  
 :  
----- :

Interview of: ALEJANDRO JOSE BERRIOS RIOS

Sunday,  
December 6, 2015

JAXPORT  
Blount Island Marine Terminal  
Jacksonville, Florida

BEFORE:

MIKE KUCHARSKI, NTSB

This transcript was produced from audio  
provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

\*Present via telephone

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## PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE INTERVIEWEE:

GILBERT FELTEL, ESQ., Tanner Bishop

JON FURUKAWA, NTSB\*  
MIKE KUCHARSKI, NTSB  
MELISSA SERRIDGE, TOTE Services  
PATTY FINSTERBUSCH, TOTE Services  
MIKE RICHARDS, NTSB

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (6:35 p.m.)

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: And I have turned the record  
4 on. Mr. Berrios, and you said it's okay to record the  
5 conversation?

6 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes. Okay. And I've also  
8 mentioned that you will be able to review the  
9 transcript. And we will make sure, through Mr.  
10 Peterson, that you get a copy to review.

11 Anyways, let me go start with the, before I  
12 go around the room and introduce everybody and then  
13 those that are on the phone, okay, let me just go  
14 through some housekeeping, if you will, or the  
15 preprinted statement of what the NTSB does okay. And  
16 what the nature of the investigation. Okay.

17 Let us note that it is now 1835. And it's  
18 Sunday the 6th. We're at Blount Island, at JAXPORT.

19 Who just came on the line? Hello?

20 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, Kevin.

22 MR. STITH: From TOTE Services.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. It's 1835, we're at  
24 Blount Island JAXPORT here in Jacksonville, Florida.  
25 It's Sunday the 6th of December. And we're here to

1 interview Alejandro Berrios. Is that correct?

2 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: For the, in relationship to  
4 what happened to the El Faro and the El Faro accident.  
5 Okay. Sinking of the El Faro.

6 My name is Michael Kucharski, I'm with the  
7 NTSB. And the NTSB, as I mentioned outside, we're an  
8 independent federal agency. Okay.

9 Our charge, from Congress, is to investigate  
10 accidents, promote public safety. And an accident  
11 investigation, we look for probable cause. What caused  
12 the accident. Okay.

13 We're not part of any other federal agency.  
14 We're a standalone agency mandated by Congress. Okay?

15 We have a party system. Because the NTSB is  
16 a party. TOTE is a party. Okay. Coast Guard is a  
17 party. ABS is a party. Okay. Those are the parties  
18 that we have in this investigation.

19 If there is any question that I ask and  
20 you're not sure of what I'm saying, please just ask me  
21 again to rephrase or you're not sure. We want you to  
22 ask, answer in the best of your knowledge. If you  
23 don't know, that's fine, you don't know. Okay. We try  
24 to stay away from speculation. Just the things that  
25 you know. Okay.

1           If you want to stop the recording and just,  
2 for us to discuss something in particular, you want  
3 clarification on, we can do that. Be glad to do that.  
4 Okay.

5           I'm not trying to trick you into any  
6 answers. We just want to try to get to the bottom of  
7 what actually happened, okay. So it's not a win or  
8 lose situation. Hopefully it's a win situation for the  
9 public and the Maritime community. Okay?

10           Part of our investigation, the parts, this  
11 is factual, we're developing facts. We'll analyze  
12 those facts. We come out with a probably cause and  
13 then make recommendations, if needed.

14           Something I need to be clear on,  
15 confidentiality. What you say know, okay, and is  
16 recorded, it will be transcribed. The recording, we  
17 never release the recording. Okay.

18           But the transcription of what you say will  
19 be made public. Because in the public docket, anybody  
20 would have access to look at it, okay.

21           We cannot offer any immunity from any legal  
22 or certificate actions. Okay. You have a Coast Guard,  
23 yes?

24           MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

25           MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. We don't offer

1 immunity on anything that's said. But we have no  
2 enforcement powers ourselves, okay?

3 You're allowed to have one personal  
4 representative here. Okay. The personal  
5 representative cannot answer on your behalf. Okay.

6 He can discuss things with you before you  
7 answer, that's fine. Or if you want clarification.  
8 But he cannot answer on your behalf. Okay. Any  
9 questions so far?

10 MR. BERRIOS: No, sir.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: All righty. Again, my name  
12 is Michael Kucharski. Mike Kucharski. And I'd like to  
13 go around the room, start in the back of me to my  
14 right.

15 MS. SERRIDGE: Melissa Serridge, HR manager  
16 for TOTE services. And a member of the Human  
17 Performance Group.

18 MS. BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB. Human  
19 Performance Group chairman.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Hi, Alejandro. My name is  
21 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I am a civil Cost Guard Marine casualty  
22 investigator. I work with Carrie and Melissa on the  
23 Human Performance Group. I'm a licensed merchant  
24 mariner.

25 LCDR [REDACTED] Hi, I'm [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the

1 Coast Guard. I'm part of the nautical operations.

2 MR. RICHARDS: Mike Richards, NTSB. I chair  
3 the meteorology group.

4 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch, TOTE  
5 Services. I'm part of the survival factors group.

6 MR. PETERSON: Lee Peterson, I am the TOTE  
7 party coordinator.

8 MR. FELTEL: Gilbert Feltel, Tanner Bishop  
9 Law Firm here as Mr. Berrios' personal representative.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, great. Thank you.  
11 And, Alejandro, with the NTSB, I'm the group chairman  
12 of nautical operations.

13 Okay. Alejandro, would you tell us, give us  
14 your background, your nautical background. Starting  
15 any schooling and then your sailing experience.

16 Oh, I'm sorry, excuse me. Thank you,  
17 Carrie. Those on the phone. Who do we have on the  
18 phone?

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, NTSB Survival  
20 Factors.

21 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Service.  
22 Nautical Operations Group.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, thank you gents. So,  
24 actually first off, would you give us your full name  
25 and spell it for us?

1 MR. BERRIOS: Okay. Alejandro Jose Berrios  
2 Rios.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, would you spell them  
4 for us?

5 MR. BERRIOS: A-L-E-J-A-N-D-R-O, J-O-S-E, B-  
6 E-R-R-I-O-S, R-I-O-S.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, thank you. And would  
8 you now give us your nautical background, your  
9 schooling, your sailing experience, the license that  
10 you hold.

11 MR. BERRIOS: Okay. I start sailing small  
12 boats since 1994. In 2006 I went to the California  
13 Maritime Academy. Graduate 2010. Start sailing 2011  
14 till the present day.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And tell us your  
16 sailing experience since 2011?

17 MR. BERRIOS: One year on tug boat. And the  
18 rest in unlimited ships. A year in Persian Gulf and  
19 then with SeaStar Line. About two years working with  
20 them. That's equivalent to a year sea time.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

22 MR. BERRIOS: With SeaStar.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. You said limited  
24 ships, what does that mean?

25 MR. BERRIOS: Unlimited.



1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Unlimited ships?

2 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So your unlimited  
4 ships, you're talking about unlimited tonnage?

5 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And what particular  
7 ships did you sail on and at what capacity under  
8 unlimited tonnage?

9 MR. BERRIOS: Okay. I did ten months as a  
10 third mate officer on a container ship. And I work as  
11 a third mate for about a year of sea time with SeaStar  
12 Line on container ships.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: What ship was that with  
14 SeaStar Lines. Steamship El Morro, Steamship El Faro.  
15 Minimum time on Steamship El Yunque.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Okay, and how much  
17 time did you spend on El Faro?

18 MR. BERRIOS: About eighty percent of my sea  
19 time with SeaStar Line was with El Faro. But I will  
20 have to look in my records to give you the exact sea  
21 time.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you say that's about  
23 one month, one year? Approximately.

24 MR. BERRIOS: About nine months sea time.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: About nine months sea time.

1 Okay. And was all that as third mate?

2 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Any questions so far  
4 about background? Okay. Tell us your duties on the El  
5 Faro, as third mate? You were third mate on the El  
6 Faro. Tell us what your duties entailed. Both in port  
7 and at sea.

8 MR. BERRIOS: In port, when we are in watch,  
9 we're in charge of the entire vessel. From bow to  
10 stern. On topics of cargo operations and the safety of  
11 the vessel.

12 At sea, a job consists of standing watch for  
13 the navigation of the vessel and day work. Day work  
14 consists, for the third mate job, of the safety  
15 inspections. Assisting from fire extinguishers, safety  
16 equipment, pyrotechnics, life boats, life rings,  
17 emerging suits, medical inventory for the hospital, et  
18 cetera.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: And when you say responsible  
20 for, did you inspect those?

21 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And did you enter  
23 them in some kind of a system --

24 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- that you inspected them?

1 What system was that?

2 MR. BERRIOS: We will enter it on Excel  
3 program. Is how we kept record of it. And we keep a  
4 hard copy as well, in the file cabinet.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And was that  
6 information sent in to the office?

7 MR. BERRIOS: No.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

9 MR. BERRIOS: To the best of my knowledge,  
10 no.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Yes, that's all you,  
12 you know, what your knowledge would be. So before we  
13 go into, further on at sea duties, talk to us about  
14 your, you say you were responsible for the vessel on  
15 watch from bow to stern, doing cargo operations. Could  
16 you tell us what that responsibility entailed?

17 MR. BERRIOS: Yes. That entails that we are  
18 in charge of during security rounds of the vessel.  
19 Search for prevention of fire. To be caught in early  
20 time.

21 Checking lines of the vessel as the tide  
22 goes up or down. Watching for the cargo operations  
23 that is going as planned. And that's it.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Before cargo startup, did  
25 you open up watertight doors?

1 MR. BERRIOS: That's correct.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Before cargo startup, did  
3 you start any fans?

4 MR. BERRIOS: That's correct.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Before cargo startup, did  
6 you open any dampers to the fans?

7 MR. BERRIOS: No.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: So are there dampers on the  
9 fans, that you know of?

10 MR. BERRIOS: There are dampers on the fans.  
11 Correct.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. But they were already  
13 opened before cargo startup?

14 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you check  
16 lashings? Any lashings during your rounds.

17 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: You're in port. At the  
19 cargo --

20 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- during cargo operations?  
22 Okay. When cargo finished, as it started finishing,  
23 did you close the watertight doors?

24 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: And let me specify when I

1 say watertight doors. I'm talking about the big  
2 watertight doors on the roll on/roll off decks where  
3 the trailers can drive through and --

4 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: So you closed those?

6 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you shut off  
8 cargo fans?

9 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Did you shut any dampers?

11 MR. BERRIOS: Negative.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: So the dampers stayed open?

13 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Were there fire  
15 dampers also apart from the cargo dampers? Down on  
16 second deck. Different fire dampers.

17 MR. BERRIOS: To the best of my knowledge,  
18 the fire dampers were just fire dampers, not cargo  
19 dampers.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Right. Okay. And with  
21 those fire dampers, I know I'm getting off a little bit  
22 onto your safety inspections, but you talked about, you  
23 know, that you did, you checked safety gear. Did you  
24 check the fire dampers?

25 MR. BERRIOS: I went on a fire fight on the

1 safety inspections. That's one of the inspections that  
2 the second mate is responsible for.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Checking the fire dampers?

4 MR. BERRIOS: The one inspection.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Sorry.

6 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Sorry if I  
8 interrupted you. So the second mate is responsible for  
9 checking the fire dampers?

10 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, great. So after the  
12 cargo finishes, you start closing watertight doors, you  
13 go ahead and shut down fans, the dampers remain open?

14 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. At sea, actually let  
16 me stop there. Anything on, question on in port  
17 duties?

18 MR. [REDACTED] Mike? [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Are we  
19 using the timeframe up until they went to sea?

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes. Please.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Did you, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Coast  
22 Guard. Alejandro, as you got ready to go to sea, what  
23 other things did you do?

24 MR. BERRIOS: To get ready for sea, what we  
25 discuss about closing the doors, we make sure that all

1 doors were closed. We will make sure, on the fire  
2 control room, that the light panel that identified the  
3 doors will actually show as closed. If one of them  
4 will show open, we will go down to the specific cargo  
5 hole and check that specific door.

6 We will close all the scuttles on the second  
7 deck. We will check all the lashing for the rail row  
8 deck. And same as the main deck. For any loose chain.  
9 If we found a loose chain, we will talk to the foreman  
10 and make sure that that was taken care of.

11 We discussed about the fans. We would shut  
12 off the fans as we closed doors.

13 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And the cargo is  
14 finished, the tugs are coming alongside, you're getting  
15 ready to cast off lines. Anything else you did? As  
16 part of your typical routine, before you maned your  
17 mooring station or unmooring station.

18 MR. BERRIOS: We would go through a pre-  
19 departure checklist if we were on the bridge. That was  
20 it.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Okay, thank you.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: This is Mike Kucharski. Did  
23 you have any pre-departure briefs? The navigation  
24 officers with the captain.

25 MR. BERRIOS: We would have one if anything

1 was out of normal.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Do you remember having any  
3 pre-departure briefs for something that was out of  
4 normal?

5 MR. BERRIOS: Yes. Yes.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, could you elaborate?  
7 Could you tell us what that was?

8 MR. BERRIOS: Yes. With Captain Eric  
9 Axelson (phonetic), I had the experience on hurricane  
10 season monitoring the weather. And making plans for,  
11 to avoid possible hurricane. Other than that, I don't  
12 recall any pre-brief, prior departure.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And where did you  
14 normally, where was your position for undocking?

15 MR. BERRIOS: Most of the time on the  
16 bridge.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: On the bridge. Okay. Did  
18 you ever read drafts?

19 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Draft marks?

21 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: And where did you read them?

23 MR. BERRIOS: We would read them at the dock  
24 prior to departure. At the forward and after  
25 (indiscernible). By the plimsoll mark.

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1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. The plimsoll on the  
2 starboard side? It docks starboard side to the,  
3 starboard side too, correct?

4 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: So did you read the draft  
6 marks at the plimsoll mark midship on the starboard  
7 side?

8 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: How about port side?

10 MR. BERRIOS: Not, I never read it on the  
11 port side.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Did you ever take any  
13 salinity readings of the dock water?

14 MR. BERRIOS: Yes. Every time at  
15 Jacksonville we took the salinity at arrival and  
16 departure.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, when you say we, did  
18 you physically do that?

19 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

21 MR. BERRIOS: Yes. Physically. Myself not  
22 all the time. Depending what was my location at that  
23 time to finish the rail row of cargo.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you.

25 MR. BERRIOS: Finishing of cargo.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you.

2 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, but none, you said  
4 nothing on the offshore? The offshore plimsoll mark.

5 MR. BERRIOS: Not myself.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Questions?

7 MR. [REDACTED] Coast Guard.  
8 From your position on the bridge, did you observe  
9 either someone else doing the offshore side or a radio  
10 command to someone else to do it?

11 MR. BERRIOS: Yes. I recall, in fact,  
12 Charlie Baird, the second mate, reading the offshore  
13 side.

14 MR. [REDACTED] And that would be every time?

15 MR. BERRIOS: I don't recall every time, but  
16 I do recall several times. While I was on watch. If  
17 he wasn't up working.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Anyone on the phone have  
20 followup questions?

21 MR. FURUKAWA: None for Jon.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you, Jon. Now talk to  
23 us about your bridge watch. What did you do on bridge  
24 watch?

25 MR. BERRIOS: Have a full operation of the

1 situation at all times. Look around for any traffic  
2 that is surrounding us that will be possible dangerous  
3 contact. Communicate via VHF or AIS with other vessels  
4 to keep communication flowing.

5 Monitor fire detection system alarm. Plot  
6 the position of the vessel in an hourly basis at sea.  
7 Monitor the weather as it comes through Sat-C email or  
8 Navtex.

9 Update any inspections that were made.  
10 Maybe to the previous hours or 24 hours. On the  
11 computer. And at this time I can't think about  
12 something else.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. I just wanted to let  
14 you finish. You say monitor weather, did you put  
15 weather into the logbook?

16 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: You enter weather? And what  
18 kind of weather did you enter into the logbook?

19 MR. BERRIOS: We will enter the wind  
20 direction, speed swell direction, height of swell.  
21 Barometer reading.

22 Any wind on the force of five or greater  
23 will be logged on an hourly basis. Along with the  
24 barometer. Air temperature, sea temperature. The air  
25 will be dry and wet (indiscernible).

1                   Visibility. If it was diminishing or  
2                   increasing. Rain. Light haze or heavy haze. Right  
3                   now I can't think about anything else.

4                   MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, when you wind speed  
5                   and direction, how did you determine wind speed and  
6                   direction?

7                   MR. BERRIOS: Through the weather  
8                   instruments we'll get the direction of the wind and the  
9                   speed.

10                  MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Tell me what weather  
11                  instruments you used?

12                  MR. BERRIOS: The wind indicator. We'll  
13                  have an antenna with the wind indicator and it will  
14                  read the speed. An anemometer.

15                  And during daylight hours visually  
16                  observing, from previous experience, observing the  
17                  surface of a water. How the friction of the wind will  
18                  interact with the surface of the water. Determine the  
19                  direction. The true direction of the wind.

20                  MR. KUCHARSKI: Now, you mentioned the  
21                  anemometer and wind direction, wind vane.

22                  MR. BERRIOS: Yes. The wind vane, yes.

23                  MR. KUCHARSKI: When did you last sail  
24                  onboard the El Faro?

25                  MR. BERRIOS: Last time I sailed onboard El

1      Faro was about two weeks prior to went down.

2                   MR. KUCHARSKI:   And at that time, the  
3      anemometer and the wind vane worked on the ship?

4                   MR. BERRIOS:    Correct.

5                   MR. KUCHARSKI:   Okay.   Were there ever any  
6      problems with the anemometer and wind vane?

7                   MR. BERRIOS:    Yes.

8                   MR. KUCHARSKI:   Can you specify what kind of  
9      problems there were?

10                  MR. BERRIOS:    I wasn't onboard at the time,  
11      but the indicator of the wind was a little bit offset.  
12      When we will cross check visually, it was a little bit  
13      offset.

14                  MR. KUCHARSKI:   Any repairs done to the  
15      anemometer that you're aware of?   Or the wind vane?

16                  MR. BERRIOS:    There were work done, prior I  
17      was on the vessel.

18                  MR. KUCHARSKI:   And how do you know this?

19                  MR. BERRIOS:    I know this through the second  
20      mate, Charlie Baird.   He was onboard when he worked on  
21      it, trying to line it up.

22                  MR. KUCHARSKI:   Is there any long onboard  
23      the ship, on the bridge, the maintenance on the bridge  
24      equipment?

25                  MR. BERRIOS:    To the best of my knowledge,

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1 yes.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: I'm going to stop. Any  
3 questions?

4 MR. [REDACTED] Coast Guard.  
5 Alejandro, when you -- what values did you input to the  
6 deck log for the speed of the wind?

7 MR. BERRIOS: We will input it in force.  
8 Put it in force (indiscernible) through, I think we  
9 never had greater than Force 7.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Okay, so you would go to the  
11 anemometer readout and you'd do what?

12 MR. BERRIOS: We will readout the wind speed  
13 and we will calculate the true wind speed.

14 MR. [REDACTED] And then how was is it, how  
15 did you take the wind speed? The anemometer had it in  
16 what value, knots, kilometers per hour, meters per  
17 second?

18 MR. BERRIOS: We will enter in as a force.  
19 Force 1 through Force 5.

20 MR. [REDACTED] But what was the readout on  
21 the anemometer?

22 MR. BERRIOS: Oh, it was in knots.

23 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So you would go to what  
24 to convert it?

25 MR. BERRIOS: So we will grab the mariner's

1 handbook for weather observation and there we just  
2 follow. It will give you the guidelines of what Force  
3 1 through Force 7 means. How many knots is 1 knot  
4 through 3 or so on.

5 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

6 MR. RICHARDS: Mike Richards, NTSB. This  
7 isn't a quiz, I don't know. How do you measure wind  
8 speed and direction from looking at the surface of the  
9 sea?

10 MR. BERRIOS: Yes. I look at the, what do  
11 you call this in English? Where the wave breaks and I  
12 looked at bubble trails. They lined up.

13 Bubble trails every 20 feet apart of each  
14 other. Sometimes 30 feet, 40 feet. Depending how  
15 strong is the wind direction. Or the wind.

16 And they'll be in trails. They're be  
17 parallel to each other. Yes, that way.

18 MR. RICHARDS: Okay. Where were you trained  
19 on that technic?

20 MR. BERRIOS: From small boat I start racing  
21 when I was a kid. When on small boat up east. And I  
22 traveled on the east coast in the Caribbean. I  
23 represent in Puerto Rico on racing.

24 And I spent most of my time working,  
25 teaching sailing small boat for kids. As racing, et

1 cetera.

2 MR. RICHARDS: Was this a technic that you  
3 saw other officers use to estimate wind speed?

4 MR. BERRIOS: No.

5 MR. RICHARDS: Thank you.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: On the phone, any questions?  
7 Jon? Kevin?

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Nothing from Jon.

9 MR. STITH: Nothing from Kevin.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you review the  
11 voyage plans?

12 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: And what level did you  
14 review? Just as a navigation officer, navigating  
15 officer, or did you review them for correctness?

16 MR. BERRIOS: I reviewed them as a third  
17 mate standing watch. As just gathering more  
18 information from getting from Point A to Point B.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you have any  
20 function? Did you gather any weather information from  
21 outside sources?

22 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Could you explain what those  
24 were?

25 MR. BERRIOS: I gather the weather mainly



1 from NOAH website. And here you can see, so now we'll  
2 go to the National Hurricane Center and search for the  
3 latest updates.

4 I pay a service to NOAH to download into a  
5 program I use for navigation called iNavX. And I can  
6 overlay all the isobars into the chart system. I have  
7 the, all the voyage plans laid out to that program.  
8 And I would download up to eight days in advance of the  
9 latest weather forecast.

10 I have used, but not frequently used, other  
11 sources as wind flow. Other programs access, different  
12 antennas or buoys at sea to get a realtime of the  
13 weather, wind direction, speed, wave, swell direction,  
14 period of the swell. Yes, that's about it.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: And this was done in port or  
16 was this done at sea?

17 MR. BERRIOS: Mainly in port prior to  
18 departure. And when in reception. In arrival port,  
19 especially in San Juan, sometimes I would gather the  
20 information from the buoy from NOAH, this is offshore,  
21 to gather information for the swell. Mainly for the  
22 inbound lag of San Juan Harbor. As the swell increases  
23 as you approach the harbor.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: And how about along the  
25 route, were you able to capture any weather along the

1 route with this app that you have?

2 MR. BERRIOS: No, I will only have the  
3 forecast on it. I only have the forecast. I didn't  
4 have access to the internet, other than what we  
5 gathered from bon voyage.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: So this --

7 MR. BERRIOS: It will get updated.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: This app that you're talking  
9 about, was that your own personal app?

10 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: It was. Okay, so it was  
12 internet based? It came from the internet?

13 MR. BERRIOS: The weather, yes.

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes, just the weather.

15 MR. BERRIOS: It will be downloaded from the  
16 internet and overlaid on the chart.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. At sea, did you have  
18 any access to that?

19 MR. BERRIOS: I had access at sea to the  
20 forecasted weather that was downloaded at departure or  
21 prior to departure. So the information will be saved  
22 on the system.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: But it was forecasted? It  
24 was --

25 MR. BERRIOS: It was forecasted.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

2 MR. BERRIOS: Same as the NOAH website.

3 Download the latest weather forecasted from them. And  
4 printed it out or just saved the document.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So at sea, what other  
6 kind of weather did you or the ship have access to?  
7 Weather sources.

8 MR. BERRIOS: From Inmarsat C we would get  
9 weather. And we'll printout from Inmarsat C. It will  
10 get recorded as well on the computer for the Inmarsat  
11 C. We have Navtex And we had the Bon Voyage System  
12 working base of internet access through satellite.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: And did you download that  
14 weather or did you upload it or --

15 MR. BERRIOS: I did. I uploaded that  
16 weather. The Bon Voyage will come up to the bridge  
17 computer as an email format attachment file. And I  
18 would download if at that time I was on watch and that  
19 email came up, I would just download the latest one  
20 into the Bon Voyage System.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: Was that sent directly from  
22 bon voyage or did the captain send that?

23 MR. BERRIOS: To the best of my knowledge,  
24 the captain will forward it to the bridge.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: This is for the Bon Voyage

1 System?

2 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And Navtex And Sat-C,  
4 Inmarsat C, came in automatically?

5 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: And were the Sat-C or  
7 Inmarsat C And Navtex, were those printed or were those  
8 graphic?

9 MR. BERRIOS: Navtex And Sat-C were printed  
10 and recorded on the actual Sat-C or Navtex. You can  
11 actually read it off the screen and go back and read a  
12 couple of days back.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Questions regarding  
14 BBS, at sea, Inmarsat C?

15 MR. RICHARDS: Mike Richards, NTSB. How  
16 many times a day did you receive a new --

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Mike Richards.

18 MR. RICHARDS: Mike Richards, NTSB. How  
19 many times --

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: I'm sorry.

21 MR. RICHARDS: I thought I said it. How  
22 many times a day did you receive a new weather data for  
23 BBS by email, while at sea?

24 MR. BERRIOS: Maximum, I recall four times a  
25 day. Minimum, two times a day.

1 MR. RICHARDS: Do you happen to recall the  
2 times of the day that you would receive those, that  
3 weather data?

4 MR. BERRIOS: Scattered throughout the 24  
5 hours. Not on a specific --

6 MR. RICHARDS: Okay.

7 MR. BERRIOS: -- timeframe. You said that  
8 you believe that the captain forwarded that information  
9 to the bridge computer, is that correct?

10 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

11 MR. RICHARDS: Did you ever discuss with  
12 anybody or do you have any sense as to how quickly the  
13 captain would forward that information once he received  
14 it?

15 MR. BERRIOS: I did check a couple of times  
16 the attachment date and compare it to the email  
17 received on the bridge. And I did saw some time  
18 difference. Maybe one, two hours, three hours  
19 difference at times. But not always. And I never  
20 checked then, I didn't check then all of them as they  
21 come up. Or came up. Yes.

22 MR. RICHARDS: Okay, thank you. I'd like to  
23 defer a moment if somebody else has a question on  
24 weather.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: This is Mike Kucharski. I

1 forgot to ask you, what watch did you actually stand?

2 MR. BERRIOS: 8:00 to 12:00.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: So 0800 to 1200 in the  
4 morning watch and then 2000 to 2400?

5 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Were you on board  
7 when they put the BBS system on?

8 MR. BERRIOS: Negative.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: You seem to be pretty  
10 knowledgeable about weather. Did you have any training  
11 in the BBS system?

12 MR. BERRIOS: No.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Did you read the manual from  
14 the BBS system?

15 MR. BERRIOS: No.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Was the manual on the  
17 bridge?

18 MR. BERRIOS: I don't recall.

19 LCDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast  
20 Guard. Earlier, when you were speaking about your  
21 observations on wind, you spoke in terms of watching  
22 the bubbles. Can you explain that a little bit more?

23 MR. BERRIOS: When the friction between the  
24 wind and the surface of the ocean, as the wave  
25 increases due to wind increases, there's like a crest -

1 -

2 LCDR [REDACTED] If I may?

3 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

4 LCDR [REDACTED] Are you referring, I just  
5 wanted to clarify for the record, are you referring to  
6 the white caps that are made when you say bubbles? Or  
7 you mean something else?

8 MR. BERRIOS: After -- no. It comes from  
9 white caps. Once you have a white cap, they line up.  
10 Those bubbles after the white cap may line up and  
11 follow a trail. But no, because I have seen bubble  
12 trials without white caps in the past too.

13 MR. RICHARDS: Mike Richards, NTSB. When  
14 specifically would you employ this technic for wind  
15 estimation?

16 MR. BERRIOS: During every time. During  
17 daylight hours. Every time we had good visibility I  
18 would look out the window and cross check the wind  
19 direction.

20 MR. RICHARDS: Was this a technic you  
21 employed to confirm the measurements that you saw from  
22 the anemometer?

23 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

24 MR. RICHARDS: Okay. Thank you.

25 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

1 LCDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast  
2 Guard. How many anemometers were onboard?

3 MR. BERRIOS: We had one.

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: Any questions on the phone?

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Yes, Jon Furukawa.

6 Alejandro, so one anemometer onboard the ship, El Faro,  
7 and to your best knowledge, that anemometer was  
8 working?

9 MR. BERRIOS: To the best of my knowledge,  
10 yes. And now that -- I want to add more into it. I'm  
11 trying to remember. We might have had two.

12 And I don't recall if it was the Steamship  
13 El Morro or Steamship El Yunque, but I do recall we had  
14 one working. An anemometer.

15 MR. [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Coast  
16 Guard.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: So you --

18 MR. [REDACTED] Sorry, Jon.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Well you don't remember if  
20 there was one or two on the El Faro?

21 MR. BERRIOS: That's correct. I do recall  
22 in fact there was one working, anemometer. I don't  
23 recall if there was another --

24 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay, thank you.

25 MR. BERRIOS: -- antenna or wind --

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1 MR. FURUKAWA: Thank you, that's all I have.

2 MR. BERRIOS: -- in place.

3 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Coast Guard.

4 Just to make a point, Captain Davidson, at the time  
5 that he made his last communication ashore, described  
6 the wind conditions, in the situation he was in, as  
7 heavy winds. He didn't describe velocity, gusting or  
8 any measurement that we would understand.

9 MR. BERRIOS: Okay.

10 MR. [REDACTED] So that's the reason that are  
11 pressing the point to understand about the anemometer.

12 MR. BERRIOS: Okay.

13 MR. [REDACTED] And the importance of the  
14 anemometer.

15 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

16 MR. [REDACTED] Okay? Thank you.

17 MR. RICHARDS: One last question. Did you  
18 have -- excuse me, go ahead.

19 MR. BERRIOS: I'm sorry. Now that you  
20 mentioned that, I don't know how many digits. I think  
21 it only read two digits on the anemometer. If it was  
22 about 100 knots I don't think, I don't know how that  
23 would read that.

24 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Just could you  
25 select range scales or values, digital?

1 MR. BERRIOS: Think there were only like two  
2 digits on that. On that display. If I remember  
3 correctly.

4 MR. RICHARDS: Confirm that's for wind  
5 magnitude?

6 MR. BERRIOS: For the wind speed. Yes.

7 MR. RICHARDS: How many wind displays were  
8 in the bridge?

9 MR. BERRIOS: One.

10 MR. RICHARDS: Did you have facsimile?

11 MR. BERRIOS: Say again?

12 MR. RICHARDS: Did you have fax machine on  
13 the bridge?

14 MR. BERRIOS: I don't recall a fax machine.

15 MR. RICHARDS: Okay, thank you.

16 MR. BERRIOS: Can you repeat that question?  
17 Like what do you mean by fax machine?

18 MR. RICHARDS: Other names for it are  
19 weather fax, HF fax --

20 MR. BERRIOS: Okay, now I understand the  
21 question. Okay. Yes, we had one and it was in not  
22 working order. Or not on. I never saw it on.

23 MR. RICHARDS: Okay, thank you.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Did you sail with Steven  
25 Shultz?

1 MR. BERRIOS: Yes. For maybe five days.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And you sailed with  
3 Captain Davidson?

4 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: How would you characterize  
6 your relationship with Captain Davidson?

7 MR. BERRIOS: Good relationship. We enjoyed  
8 working together. He was a teacher. And can I take a  
9 moment?

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Sure.

11 MR. [REDACTED] Let's just go off the record.

12 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went  
13 off the record for a brief moment and resumed at 7:23  
14 p.m.)

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, we're restarting the  
16 interview now. It's 1923. And, Alejandro, I think I  
17 asked you about Captain Davidson. You had a good  
18 relationship, you said he was a good teacher.

19 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: And did you feel like if  
21 there was some kind of a problem with navigation, the  
22 way his decision, you could question that?

23 MR. BERRIOS: Can you rephrase the question?

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes. If he was doing  
25 something wrong, you know, in navigation. Some kind of

1 a command decision. You were up on the bridge when the  
2 ship come in and out of port?

3 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: If you saw something wrong,  
5 him doing something wrong, could you say, hey, you're  
6 doing something wrong? Did you feel comfortable with  
7 that?

8 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you sail with Ray  
10 Thompson? Besides now.

11 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And what ships did  
13 you sail with him?

14 MR. BERRIOS: I sail with him on Steamship  
15 El Morro And Steamship El Faro.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. How would you  
17 characterize your relationship with him?

18 MR. BERRIOS: Very good.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you have any  
20 questions on Captain Davidson's leadership style?

21 MR. BERRIOS: No.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Questions, around the  
23 room?

24 MS. BELL: This is Carrie Bell, NTSB. How  
25 would you characterize his relationships with, from

1 your observation, the other people on the bridge? Of  
2 the people who were on El Faro. So you worked with  
3 them together with Captain Davidson.

4 MR. BERRIOS: I think, you know, they were  
5 all good. Good relation. Good communication.

6 MS. BELL: Would you say in general he was  
7 well respected by the crew?

8 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

9 MS. BELL: So one of the things we're just  
10 trying to understand a little bit more is we've heard  
11 him characterized as meticulous, safety conscious, well  
12 respected. And then we've also heard people mention  
13 that he was belligerent And sometimes arrogant to crew  
14 members.

15 So we're just trying to understand. And I  
16 was hoping you could help us understand that a little  
17 bit better.

18 MR. BERRIOS: I did saw maybe one occasion,  
19 one percent of the time that I spent with him, that  
20 maybe it was towards that description that you're  
21 talking. But minimal.

22 MS. BELL: Okay. And can you describe that  
23 at all?

24 MR. BERRIOS: This one time I was in a  
25 situation with a crew member and I thought he handled

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1 it, at the time, in a correct way. And I later, after  
2 a reflection on it, my conclusion on how he handled it  
3 was not a good one.

4 I felt in a position where Captain Mike  
5 Davidson was trying to explain to me what was the  
6 problem in a way where it make me feel uncomfortable.

7 MS. BELL: Was this directed toward you --

8 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

9 MS. BELL: -- or was it towards someone  
10 else?

11 MR. BERRIOS: It's directed -- it was in a  
12 conversation, one on one, where at that time he didn't,  
13 I thought he didn't listen to what the situation was.  
14 Was more implying, more what he thought it was.

15 MS. BELL: Was that in relation to anything  
16 related to duties on the bridge, navigation or anything  
17 that would be --

18 MR. BERRIOS: No.

19 MS. BELL: -- relevant to safe navigation or  
20 anything to do with the vessel safety?

21 MR. BERRIOS: No. I thought it was more  
22 towards my safety.

23 MS. BELL: What, can you --

24 MR. BERRIOS: It was one time I had a  
25 situation with a crew member where I felt harassed

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1 physically. Or the possibility of it becoming  
2 physically. And at the time I thought he handled it  
3 correct when he was trying to fix the problem by just  
4 trying to imply that I just needed to work on or not  
5 work on, I take that back, that he tried to imply that  
6 the situation was only just a minimal situation. Let's  
7 put it that way. Where at the time I thought it was  
8 bigger than minimal.

9 MS. BELL: Okay.

10 MR. BERRIOS: That's all. And it seemed  
11 like at that point it was implied this is what  
12 happened, that's it, that's bottom line.

13 MS. BELL: Okay.

14 MR. BERRIOS: There's no room for discussion  
15 at that time. That's where that one percent comes in.

16 MS. BELL: Okay. So I just want to clarify,  
17 And I don't want to put words in your mouth, but -- so  
18 you're saying that you felt threatened by someone else  
19 And he minimized that, in your assessment?

20 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

21 MS. BELL: Okay. In general, would you say  
22 that he got along with the crew?

23 MR. BERRIOS: Yes. Yes.

24 MS. BELL: Okay. In terms of safety, would  
25 you say he was safety conscious?

1 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

2 MS. BELL: And did he attend the safety  
3 meetings that you -- I know there were monthly safety  
4 meetings. Would he attend those meetings?

5 MR. BERRIOS: Two percent of the meetings he  
6 would be present.

7 MS. BELL: And what do you think about that?

8 MR. BERRIOS: Not a safe practice.

9 MS. BELL: Were there other things of that  
10 nature that made you think that that could be not  
11 safety conscious? I'm not saying that very well.

12 You say he's like safety conscious, but he  
13 did not attend safety meetings?

14 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

15 MS. BELL: Anything else related to safety  
16 that he did not adhere to?

17 MR. BERRIOS: I do recall, but again, I was  
18 not on the vessel in every place at all times. But  
19 while I do my day work on deck, I never saw him on  
20 deck.

21 My day work would consist between 1300 and  
22 1700. Everyday at sea. I don't know the other times.  
23 That's the only relation to safety.

24 MS. BELL: Okay, thank you. I'll pass it  
25 around.

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1 MR. [REDACTED] Coast Guard.

2 You know, you mentioned deck. Can you compare the  
3 amount of time Captain Axelson was directly involved  
4 with bridge operations at sea? With Captain Davidson.

5 MR. BERRIOS: Can you rephrase bridge  
6 operations?

7 MR. [REDACTED] Yes. In other words, how much  
8 time did Captain Davidson spend on the bridge, involved  
9 in, you know, the work with the bridge? Interacting  
10 with the ships officers for ships business, versus  
11 Captain Axelson.

12 MR. BERRIOS: They were both the same.

13 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Now you served for  
14 awhile, this is [REDACTED] with the Coast guard, you  
15 served for awhile as the second mate, correct?

16 MR. BERRIOS: Only for a week. In Steamship  
17 El Yunque.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Okay, it was the El Yunque,  
19 not the El Faro?

20 MR. BERRIOS: In El Yunque I went for about  
21 a week. And in El Faro, was about three days. I  
22 joined in San Juan and got off in Jacksonville.

23 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

24 MR. BERRIOS: I was just going for a short  
25 trip.

1 MR. [REDACTED] But you served as second mate?

2 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

3 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And did you relieve  
4 second mate Randolph?

5 MR. BERRIOS: I relieved second mate Charlie  
6 Baird. No -- yes, that's correct. Charlie Baird. And  
7 second mate Randolph relieved me.

8 MR. [REDACTED] In your duties as second mate,  
9 on that trip from San Juan back to Jacksonville, did  
10 you have any discussion with either mate Baird or mate  
11 Randolph about the August, late August voyage, where  
12 they went through the Old Bahama Channel?

13 MR. BERRIOS: No.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Okay, thank you.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: On the phone? Any questions  
16 on the phone?

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Yes. Jon Furukawa, NTSB.  
18 Alejandro, so you sailed with second mate Baird and  
19 second mate Randolph when you were third mate, correct?

20 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. The working  
22 relationship with Captain Davidson with the second  
23 mates, was there any difference how Captain Davidson  
24 interacted with second mate Baird compared to second  
25 mate Randolph?

1 MR. BERRIOS: No, that I noticed.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Did second mate Baird  
3 or second mate Randolph, did either of them verbalize  
4 or tell you of any problems in the working relationship  
5 with Captain Davidson?

6 MR. BERRIOS: No.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: No? Okay. When you were  
8 sailing with Captain Davidson, let's see, Captain  
9 Davidson wasn't selected to go to the LNG ship,  
10 correct?

11 MR. BERRIOS: To the best of my knowledge,  
12 correct.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Did Captain Davidson  
14 talk to you about not being selected to go to the LNG  
15 ship?

16 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Can you tell us about that  
18 conversation?

19 MR. BERRIOS: Once I took the LNG class at  
20 AMO and I came back to the ship, he asked me to go to  
21 his office. And he asked me about the class.

22 And that he was a bit disappointed that he  
23 wasn't selected, to his knowledge, to go to the new  
24 vessel. He was hoping to go maybe to the second  
25 vessel. And yes, that was about it.

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1           He did, when I got off of the ship, the next  
2 time we talked about it, he just congratulate me on  
3 being selected on the new ships. And, yes, that was  
4 about it.

5           MR. FURUKAWA: So he was still hoping to get  
6 selected for the second ship?

7           MR. BERRIOS: That was my best understanding  
8 that he was hoping to get selected. Maybe to the  
9 second ship.

10           Why I bring this up is because he  
11 specifically told me that he didn't mind being not  
12 selected for the first one or being the lead on the  
13 news, he only wanted to work on this run.

14           MR. FURUKAWA: Now can you repeat that  
15 again? That he was to the second one or the El Faro?

16           MR. BERRIOS: I'm talking about the TOTE  
17 ships.

18           MR. FURUKAWA: Right.

19           MR. BERRIOS: That he didn't mind if he  
20 wasn't selected for the first one.

21           MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

22           MR. BERRIOS: That he hoped to get selected  
23 for the second one. And that he didn't mind to be on  
24 the news for any --

25           MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So for what you know,

1 did you know that he was selected for the second ship?

2 MR. BERRIOS: No.

3 MR. FURUKAWA: Or not?

4 MR. BERRIOS: No, I don't know anything  
5 about it.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: No? Okay. So everything  
7 that you heard him talk to you about, for LNG, was for  
8 he was positive?

9 MR. BERRIOS: Yes, for the most part. At  
10 the beginning he was disappointed that he wasn't  
11 selected. He did mention to me that, when I came after  
12 that LNG class, he did mention to me that every, that  
13 that trip he might be a little bit off. Meaning that  
14 every second his thought was about getting into the  
15 second trip or why he wasn't selected.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

17 MR. BERRIOS: He did advise me on that, in  
18 ahead of time.

19 And yes, I did saw him a little bit  
20 frustrated at times, but then the other times I saw him  
21 just fine. Last time I saw him I was to report in  
22 Puerto Rico. He looked just fine. I mean he just told  
23 me, I'll see you next week. We'll be here.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay, thank you very much.  
25 That's all I have.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Alejandro, I'd like to, this  
2 is Mike Kucharski, I'd like to go back to your safety  
3 inspections. You said you went, you checked the safety  
4 gear.

5 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. You checked  
7 lifeboats?

8 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: Any problems with the  
10 lifeboats?

11 MR. BERRIOS: No problems that, other than  
12 maybe one time it came back to the ship and the bilge  
13 ball, that goes with the lifeboat. I went back and one  
14 was in bad shape and the other one was missing. And we  
15 put an order on it. Another time we had to replace the  
16 water of the lifeboat.

17 Other than that, the lifeboat, to the best  
18 of my knowledge, is in good shape. You know,  
19 everything was in place.

20 The lifeboat, we will test it on a weekly  
21 basis. Lowering it. And the hull, it looked fine.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: No problems with the winches  
23 or the --

24 MR. BERRIOS: No.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

1 MR. BERRIOS: No.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Davits?

3 MR. BERRIOS: No. And we had new wires  
4 replaced. Maybe they were not even a year old. Was  
5 onboard the ship.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: And safety inspections, did  
7 you also inspect the emerging suits?

8 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: Did the crew members put  
10 them on regularly to check them?

11 MR. BERRIOS: It was not regularly basis.  
12 If I remember correctly, it was on a quarterly basis  
13 that we did a drill where we pull out the emerging  
14 suits so everybody try the emerging suits.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: And during this drill, what  
16 happened? It was at a particular time and did somebody  
17 go and check to see that everybody put them on?

18 MR. BERRIOS: Yes, we'll just gather  
19 together. All the crew mens. And bring them down.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you also, as part  
21 of your duties, when new crew members came onboard,  
22 give them an indoctrination in the safety gear?

23 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Did --

25 MR. BERRIOS: Yes, at times I would do it.

1 Meaning, at times that assignment was delegated to me.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Who else was it delegated  
3 to?

4 MR. BERRIOS: The chief mate.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So you gave the  
6 safety indoctrination to the new crew member?

7 MR. BERRIOS: Yes, I have.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: And as part of that  
9 indoctrination, did you take them around on deck and  
10 show them things?

11 MR. BERRIOS: Yes. I'll show them  
12 everything from bow to stern. From the deck machinery  
13 to watertight doors, fire dampers.

14 Where to turn on and shutoff the fans,  
15 scuttles, emergency fire pump. Start location locally  
16 at the tank tub, at the second deck or send command to  
17 the engine room, the emergency fuel shutoff system, the  
18 location.

19 The fire control room. How to run the  
20 sprinkler system, co2 system. The emergency gear  
21 locations. The EEBDs location.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you say that, E-E-B-D?

23 MR. BERRIOS: Yes. Emergency escape  
24 breathing device.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Thank you.

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1 MR. BERRIOS: Hospital location, first aid  
2 location, defibrillator location. We'll run through  
3 the emergency signals and their duties per station  
4 bill. The location of the emerging suit and life  
5 jacket. Pyrotechnics.

6 For the ABs that would stand watch, I will  
7 just take them and show them where was the manual boat  
8 GPS safety soft key to plot the position. How to  
9 release the life ring from the bridge wings, in case of  
10 an emergency.

11 The procedure is for my report on the  
12 bridge. And right now, I cannot recall any other  
13 topics.

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you give any  
15 indoctrination to riding crew?

16 MR. BERRIOS: I didn't have the chance.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Questions around the  
18 room?

19 MS. BELL: I have one more question. Carrie  
20 Bell, NTSB. In your experience, would you say there  
21 was commercial pressure? Any kind of commercial  
22 pressure to get the ship to arrive on time in Puerto  
23 Rico?

24 MR. BERRIOS: No.

25 MS. BELL: There was no repercussions if you

1 were late?

2 MR. BERRIOS: No.

3 MS. BELL: Thank you.

4 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Coast Guard.

5 Mike asked you a question about the riding crew. Could  
6 you explain to me, if you could, how well the Polish  
7 crew could talk to you in English?

8 MR. BERRIOS: I never had to interact with  
9 them. We did cross on deck, mostly on second deck. I  
10 did recall them working on the forward end of the  
11 vessel. On the second deck.

12 But I never had to talk to them. They  
13 seemed, they were working on the own group, on  
14 different projects. And never was in the position,  
15 other than just waiving my hand.

16 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Did you -- did they  
17 attend safety drills?

18 MR. BERRIOS: I'm trying to recall their  
19 faces on the safety drill. I do recall that Mike  
20 Davidson and Eric Axelson will make sure that every  
21 person that was onboard had to be present at the safety  
22 drills. That was a big thing from both captains.

23 They will make sure, they would report to  
24 the bridge if they were riders. That was their  
25 location. And the captain will redirect them from

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1 there.

2 MR. [REDACTED] And anytime you were aboard,  
3 did you see any of them speak an English language?

4 MR. BERRIOS: I didn't have the chance to  
5 talk to them or got in a situation where I had to talk  
6 to them. But maybe during the drills, because I wasn't  
7 on the bridge.

8 My duty was not to be on the bridge at the  
9 drills. Was more to be on deck. Maybe the second mate  
10 might answer that question to you. If he had a chance  
11 to talk to them or not.

12 MR. [REDACTED] So for abandon ship drill,  
13 they didn't leave the bridge or did they come to their  
14 muster station in the boat station?

15 MR. BERRIOS: They would go to the bridge.  
16 And from there the captain will redirect them if the  
17 captain want them to go somewhere else.

18 MR. [REDACTED] But did you ever observe them  
19 at one of the boats, for an abandon ship drill?

20 MR. BERRIOS: I don't recall.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Okay, thank you.

22 MR. BERRIOS: I don't recall the face.

23 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, any questions on the  
25 phone?

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Yes. Jon Furukawa, NTSB.  
2 Alejandro, you said that Captain Davidson attended  
3 about two percent of the safety meetings. Was this  
4 throughout the whole time you sailed with them or was  
5 it like toward the end or toward the beginning that you  
6 started that you attend the safety meetings?

7 MR. BERRIOS: This was --

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Can you recall?

9 MR. BERRIOS: I recall from the time I was  
10 onboard, my sea time, that's the average I recall. If  
11 I saw him twice.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

13 MR. BERRIOS: It was probably, was correct.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: Well the times, was that at  
15 the end or throughout your ten months --

16 MR. BERRIOS: Throughout.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: -- you were there?

18 MR. BERRIOS: Throughout. Throughout.

19 Maybe I saw him four times. Three times.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Throughout?

21 MR. BERRIOS: Throughout.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Let's see. You also  
23 said that you never saw Captain Davidson on deck during  
24 day work. When you were there 1300 to 1700 daily.

25 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Did you see Captain Axelson  
2 on deck?

3 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: When you were working in the  
5 afternoon?

6 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: You would? Okay. Okay. And  
8 just to clarify, your abandon ship station, where was  
9 that?

10 MR. BERRIOS: Mine was the Boat Number 2.

11 MR. FURUKAWA: Boat Number 2.

12 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And were you boat  
14 commander?

15 MR. BERRIOS: No.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. For abandon ship  
17 drill, you would muster with the crew members at the  
18 port life boat, Boat Number 2?

19 MR. BERRIOS: Correct.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: And during this time, do I  
21 understand that you don't recall ever seeing the Polish  
22 riding crew muster at your boat?

23 MR. BERRIOS: I don't recall. And one of  
24 the reasons is, is that the steward most of the time  
25 was delegate to take muster at the drills. And it

1 happens to be on Life Boat Number 2. And he will take  
2 over, of the muster.

3 I would just concentrate more in the  
4 operation of lowering the boat and delegating who will  
5 go to do different jobs.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. But during your drill,  
7 if there were, you know, one, you know, either all five  
8 Polish riding crew members or half of them, at least  
9 two or three, wouldn't you have noticed them at your,  
10 the muster station?

11 MR. BERRIOS: Yes, I can't recall.  
12 Honestly, I can recall maybe they were present, but I  
13 can't recall. That would be an assumption.

14 And the only reason I say this, is because  
15 at times the area of the lifeboat embarkation deck,  
16 some of the crew might gather together as a group. And  
17 people might get blocked by other people.

18 And from most of the time, the location that  
19 I would be on a lifeboat, I would be more on the  
20 operations side of lowering the boat. And my eyes will  
21 be on the davits and the safety of the people that were  
22 actually at the gripes, at the boson (phonetic), on the  
23 brake and operating the machinery. That was, my eyes  
24 were more involved towards that direction. And on the  
25 UHF radio.

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1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. There were also two,  
2 two chief engineers that were also in charge of the  
3 riding crew, off duty chief engineers. Did you notice  
4 if any of them would show up at the Number 2 boat  
5 station for abandon ship crew?

6 MR. BERRIOS: Maybe I recall one.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

8 MR. BERRIOS: Okay, now that I'm reflecting  
9 on it --

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

11 MR. BERRIOS: -- I do recall the chief  
12 engineer. Right now I can't think about his name. I  
13 have a mental picture of him.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay, so you remember one of  
15 the riding chief engineers at your boat station, but  
16 during that ten month period that you're on the or nine  
17 month period that you're on the El Faro, you don't  
18 recall ever seeing any of the Polish riding crew there?

19 MR. BERRIOS: I don't recall.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Correct? That's all I have.  
21 Thank you very much, Alejandro.

22 MR. BERRIOS: Can I add something up.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Go ahead.

24 MR. BERRIOS: I want to add up that during  
25 the nine months or ten months period onboard, that the

1 riding crews were not all the time present. Probably  
2 the minimum time, well during my sea time.

3 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Thank you, Alejandro.

4 MR. BERRIOS: Okay.

5 MR. RICHARDS: Mike Richards, NTSB. Just a  
6 couple more questions. At anytime while you were  
7 onboard the El Faro, did you send an email to friends  
8 or family or anybody else onshore?

9 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

10 MR. RICHARDS: Can you send an email from  
11 the bridge?

12 MR. BERRIOS: I understand. Yes, that's  
13 correct.

14 MR. RICHARDS: Have you ever sent an email  
15 from the bridge computer? From a bridge computer.

16 MR. BERRIOS: From the bridge computer, I  
17 don't recall sending an email, other than within the  
18 ship.

19 MR. RICHARDS: Right.

20 MR. BERRIOS: But from the chief mate  
21 computer, which I understand uses the same system as  
22 the bridge, I did send email out to (indiscernible).  
23 Yes.

24 MR. RICHARDS: How many computers are aboard  
25 the ship that you can use to send email?

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1 MR. BERRIOS: There is one at one of the  
2 gyms of Steamship El Faro.

3 MR. RICHARDS: Okay.

4 MR. BERRIOS: There was one available for  
5 the crew. Same deck as the engineers deck and  
6 hospital. Is available for anyone to send emails out.  
7 Or receive.

8 That was the only public one. Then the rest  
9 was at the chief mate, chief engineer, captain and  
10 first engineer.

11 MR. RICHARDS: Okay. Can you send an email  
12 from the computer that has the BBS program on it, on  
13 the bridge?

14 MR. BERRIOS: Correct. That's, to the best  
15 of my knowledge, I never send an email from the bridge  
16 out to a family member, but yes, that's my answer.

17 MR. RICHARDS: Okay, thank you.

18 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

19 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch, TOTE  
20 Services. The safety meetings were once a month,  
21 correct?

22 MR. BERRIOS: The safety meetings is about  
23 once a month. Yes.

24 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Did they always happen in  
25 the morning or was it sometimes in the morning and

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1 sometimes in the afternoon?

2 MR. BERRIOS: Sometimes in the morning,  
3 sometimes the afternoon. Yes.

4 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Did the captain stand the  
5 watch, Captain Davidson, did he stand the watch so that  
6 the whole crew could go so that he could relieve the  
7 bridge watch? Was that his reason? One of his reasons  
8 possibly?

9 MR. BERRIOS: Possibly, yes. But we never  
10 discussed that as a fact. Is it possibly, yes. He  
11 will be standing watch while the rest of the crew will  
12 be present.

13 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: If the safety meeting was  
14 happening on the 8:00 to 12:00 watch, would he come up  
15 and relieve you? I guess that's --

16 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

17 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay. Thank you.

18 LCDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast  
19 Guard. While you were underway and you would do your  
20 safety checks or lashing checks, any of the day working  
21 you would do while underway, did you use the scuttles  
22 to go from one cargo hold to the other?

23 MR. BERRIOS: Yes.

24 LCDR [REDACTED] Were those typically left  
25 both end closed? Did you --

1 MR. BERRIOS: Closed.

2 LCDR [REDACTED] Unless you were using them?

3 MR. BERRIOS: Yes, closed. And then we had,  
4 there's a sign if we had to open it and go inside the  
5 scuttle, we had a sign that will identify that there  
6 was some crew member below.

7 LCDR [REDACTED] Okay, thank you.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: Any other questions?  
9 Alejandro, is there anything you'd like to add?

10 MR. BERRIOS: No.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Thank you very much.  
12 It's 8:10, we'll take a ten minute break, roll into our  
13 next interview.

14 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went  
15 off the record at 8:10 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: EL FARO INCIDENT OFF THE COAST  
OF THE BAHAMAS ON OCT. 1, 2015  
NTSB Accident No. DCA16MM001  
Interview of Alejandro Berrios

DATE: 12-06-14

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 60 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR

ALEJANDRO BERRIOS

TAKEN ON

DECEMBER 6, 2015

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
<del>NO</del>			
<del>ENTRIES</del>			
<del>MADE; SEE</del>			
<del>ATTACHED</del>			
<del>SHEET</del>			
<del>(AB)</del>			

If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEEDED.

                      
Initials

ALEJANDRO BERRIOS

Printed Name of Person providing the above information

[REDACTED]

Signature of Person providing the above information

18 DECEMBER 2015

Date

SEE ATTACHED ERRATA SHEET (AB)

ATTACHMENT SHEET CORRECTING TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR  
ALEJANDRO JOSE BERRIOS RIOS  
TAKEN ON  
DECEMBER 6, 2015

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
9	14-15	"Steamship El Morro...."	Speaker is Rios, not Kucharski
10	17	emerging	immersion
13	25	on a fire fight on	on
15	7	rail row	Ro/Ro
15	16	maned	manned
17	23	rail row of	Ro/Ro
18	25	operation	appraisal
20	17	a	the
25	1,4,20	NOAH	NOAA
25	22	lag	leg
27	2	NOAH	NOAA
30	7,11,24	BBS	BVS
31	12	trials	trails
33	22	about	above
41	3	Axelson	Axelsson
45	15	trip	ship
46	12	it	I
47	7, 13,14	emerging	immersion
47	19	All the crew mens	At the crew mess
48	16	tub	top
49	4	emerging	immersion
50	20	Axelson	Axelsson
57	12	BBS	BVS

## ALEJANDRO BERRIOS

DECEMBER 6, 2015

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
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NO CORRECTIONS NEED.

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Signature of Person providing the above information

18 DECEMBER 2015

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**NTSB RESPONSE TO ATTACHMENT SHEET CORRECTING TRANSCRIPT  
OF INTERVIEW FOR ALEJANDRO JOSE BERRIOS  
RIOS**

TAKEN  
ON DECEMBER 6,  
2015

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	SUGGESTED CORRECTED WORDING	NTSB RESPONSE
9	14-15	"Steamship El Morro...."	Speaker is Rios, not Kucharski	AGREE
10	17	emerging	immersion	AGREE
13	25	on a fire fight on	on	Do not agree
15	7	rail row	Ro/Ro	AGREE
15	16	maned	manned	AGREE
17	23	rail row of	Ro/Ro	AGREE
18	25	operation	appraisal	Do not agree. Transcript correct as is
20	17	a	the	Do not agree. Transcript correct as is
25	1,4,20	NOAH	NOAA	AGREE
25	22	lag	leg	AGREE
27	2	NOAH	NOAA	AGREE
30	7,11,24	BBS	BVS	AGREE
31	12	trials	trails	AGREE
33	22	about	above	AGREE
41	3	Axelson	Axelsson	AGREE
45	15	trip	ship	AGREE
46	12	it	I	AGREE
47	7, 13,14	emerging	immersion	AGREE
47	19	All the crew mens	At the crew mess	AGREE
48	16	tub	top	AGREE
49	4	emerging	immersion	AGREE
50	20	Axelson	Axelsson	AGREE
57	12	BBS	BVS	AGREE